

I see no reason why *Columbina griseola* Spix = *Columbina passerina griseola* (Spix), may not be properly taken as the type of *Columbina*, in accordance with rule *d* of Art. 30 of the International Code respecting the equal availability of species and subspecies as types. In the latter case the basis is type by tautonymy, in the former type by subsequent designation, where a subspecies of the species that became type by subsequent designation was the originally included form. The A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature, however, in considering the case of *Columbina*, thought that a principle was here involved which might affect other cases, and deemed it best to refer the matter to the International Zoölogical Commission for decision—a step I heartily approve, and therefore respectfully offer the foregoing exposition as a brief on the chief points at issue.

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## THE DESTRUCTION OF WHISTLING SWANS (*OLOR COLUMBIANUS*) AT NIAGARA FALLS.

BY JAMES H. FLEMING.

DISASTERS that so often overtake migrating birds are seldom matters of newspaper interest, but in the present case the birds were so conspicuous and the circumstances so unusual that public interest was aroused by the account in the Buffalo papers of March 17, 1908, of a slaughter of wild swans that took place at Niagara Falls on the 15th. It was stated that 128 birds were taken out of a flock that had been swept over the Falls, and the names of several men who had made the largest bags were given. I was able to get confirmation of the story from Mr. J. S. Wallace who was in touch with friends at Niagara, and on receiving two swans and more details on the 19th, Mr. Wallace and I decided to go to Niagara Falls and get the story at first hand, and the following is as nearly a correct account as it was possible to get.

On the morning of March 14, 1908, a flock of three or four hundred swans lit in the Upper Niagara River below Grand Island

and not far from the village of Chippawa, Ont. All day detached parties of swans were seen floating down the river with the current till danger of being swept into the Canadian rapids caused the birds to rise and fly back to their starting point. They were unable to obtain food, and the constant battling with the swift current no doubt weakened them. They were still in the upper river Sunday morning the 15th. It was a day of drizzling rain. About 11.30 A. M. William Leblond, who lives at the 'Maid of the Mist' landing below the Horseshoe Falls, was on the ice bridge that then barred the river at that point. His attention being called by its cries to a swan struggling at the edge of the ice, he looked up the river towards the Falls. The water seemed covered with a struggling mass of swans that were rapidly being swept towards him. Some were caught in the Bass Rock eddy and detained near the Ontario Power Company's building, but the great majority were carried by the current directly to the ice bridge and either cast up, or ground against it, by the masses of floating ice that were continually coming over the Falls. Some of the birds were already dead, many were injured, and the rest stunned and unable to help themselves; though how any could have remained alive after coming over the falls is difficult to understand; yet many of the birds were able to call loudly in their distress. News of the disaster quickly spread and men went out on the ice bridge clubbing all the swans that could be reached, while others fished the dead and dying birds out of the water with poles, and the Italian laborers at the power works attended to all that came ashore at their point. On Monday any birds that could not be reached with clubs and poles were shot. Just how many of the flock came over the falls will never be known but after the disaster it was estimated that something under 200 birds remained on the upper river; at least 100 birds were either slaughtered or picked up between the falls and the ice bridge; some were certainly sucked under the ice and caught in the fissures of the ice bridge, and only two were taken below that point. There seems little doubt that 100 is a safe estimate of the birds taken, and all are agreed that none escaped alive, though it afterwards became apparent that many of the birds would have recovered from the shock had they been left alone, though the town of Niagara Falls would thereby have missed a gastronomic experience much to its liking, for contrary to the usual belief these swans were good eating.

We found on arriving at the Falls that Mr. Harry Schumacker had arranged interviews with some of the principal witnesses of the tragedy, and we were able to get a great deal of information from Mr. Harry Williams and Mr. Leblonde. At the latter's place we saw 30 swans hanging *en masse*. The sight was not one easily forgotten. We were within a few yards of the scene of the killing, it was late when we reached the place, and at first the swans stood out as an indistinct patch of white in the surrounding darkness, but when we were able to examine the mass with the aid of lanterns we understood the extent of the tragedy that had taken place.

On the 18th three more swans were taken; one of these was alive and was taken to the Buffalo Zoo by Mr. James Savage, where it fully recovered. Another, Mr. Leblonde told us, had taken refuge in some inaccessible place near the 'Cave of the Winds' and was still alive on the 20th.

On the 22d (Sunday) 12 more swans came over the Falls; six of these were taken at the Bass Rock eddy, and five at the ice bridge, while three were seen to rise from the water between the Falls and ice bridge and *fly back* over the Falls and on up the river.

Mr. Wallace made several subsequent visits to the Falls and cleared up some doubtful points; we were also able to compare our notes with those secured by Mr. James Savage<sup>1</sup> of Buffalo. Swans come over the Falls occasionally, some were taken in 1906 and 1907, but nothing like the present case is remembered by any one.

In all I saw thirty-six birds; of these I was able to secure thirty-three, resulting in a unique series of measurements, and adding to my collection all the sterna, and the skins of twenty-eight birds, while five were handed over to friends for mounting. A careful examination of the swans showed that several had broken wings, others had the clavicles dislocated, and in one or two the sternum was crushed, others had the lungs congested, but it was not possible to examine the birds as thoroughly as I would have wished. A good many of the birds showed no signs of injury except where they had been hit with clubs, or shot, and I am certain that had they been allowed time to recover from the shock they would have

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<sup>1</sup> See Bulletin of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences, IX, 1908, pp. 23-28, for a full account by Mr. Savage of this same disaster.

escaped. I found the birds with one exception fat and in excellent condition, but was disappointed to find the stomachs empty; in only three cases I found slight traces of vegetable matter. The birds had not fed since they strayed into the Niagara River. The weights varied from 11 lb. 15 oz. to 18 lb. 10 oz.; a fourth were birds of less than a year old, the remainder were fully white, and some must be very old birds. Mr. P. A. Taverner secured drawings of all the variations in the beaks. The tedious work of making up so many skins was safely accomplished by Mr. H. H. Mitchell and assistants.

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## THE MACAW OF DOMINICA.

BY AUSTIN HOBART CLARK,

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SOME time ago I published<sup>1</sup> an account of the Macaws which at one time inhabited the Lesser Antillean Islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and possibly Dominica, though I was unable to find a definite record of their occurrence in the last named. Mr. Walter Rothschild, who has recently published a magnificent work on the extinct birds of the world, was also unable to state definitely that a macaw had at any time been a resident of that island.

Through the kindness of Mr. J. H. Riley of the U. S. National Museum, who gave me the reference to the work, I am now enabled to remove the query from my previous record of a macaw from Dominica. In a book by Thomas Atwood, dated 1791<sup>2</sup>, I find the

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<sup>1</sup> The Lesser Antillean Macaws; Auk, Vol. XXII, No. 3, pp. 266-273, July, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> The History of the Island of Dominica, Containing a description of its situation, extent, climate, mountains, rivers, natural productions &c. &c. together with an account of the civil government, trade, laws, customs, and manners of the different inhabitants of that Island, its conquest by the French, and restoration to the British dominions, by Thomas Atwood. London: printed for J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard, MDCCXCI.

Col. H. W. Fielden and Mr. C. B. Cory both mention this work, but it was not accessible to me when I was working on West Indian birds.